



15 JUN 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 18 May 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The latest possible statistics on the deduction of overseas pensions from NZ Super. Please send me the detailed statistics which lists the numbers of deductions from each individual country and the amounts deducted, as well as of the total numbers of affected pensioners and the deducted amount. I would also request a similar list about the deductions under the Spousal Provision/Deduction.*

*At an earlier date the Ministry had claimed such spousal deduction lists didn't exist. But I am confident that the Ministry now holds this information, as at the HRRT hearing in March your official Alexander McKenzie quoted 588 affected pensioners as of October 2017.*

The Ministry regularly publishes information regarding trends in benefit receipt, including overseas pensions deductible under section 70 of the Social Security Act, on the Benefit Fact Sheets. This data is published in the New Zealand Superannuation and Veteran's Pension data tables available here: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit).

The Ministry is unable to provide you with information regarding spousal deductions as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

The data presented to the Human Rights Review Tribunal in March 2018 was the result of a one-off piece of work undertaken for this specific purpose, and based on data as at 27 October 2017. It is not part of the Ministry's standard reporting. This work indicated that as at 27 October 2017, 588 couples were affected by spousal deduction, and that the removal of spousal deductions would increase New Zealand Superannuation expenditure by approximately \$2.7 million annually. More recent data is not available.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding deductions under section 70 of the Social Security Act, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Elisabeth Brunt  
**General Manager, Ministerial and Executive Services**